ENDC/205
30 November 1967
ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

CONFERENCE OF THE EIGHTEEN-NATION COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT

I T A L Y

Working Paper

Proposal concerning the transfer of fissile material

(Extract from the speech delivered at the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament on 1 August by H.E. Mr. Amintore Fanfani, Minister for Foreign Affairs).

GE.67-25051
67-28923

"Because of the importance we attribute to a well-balanced and effective treaty, no effort should be spared to make progress with other collateral disarmament measures, especially if they are likely to encourage adherence to the draft treaty.

I therefore wonder whether it would not be possible to imagine some proposal which, while linked up with measures examined in the past, might respond to certain imperatives important for all of us and more particularly for the non-nuclear Powers that have undertaken the negotiation of the treaty. This proposal could be independent of the treaty, linked with or even incorporated in it according to circumstances; it could consist of an agreement under which the nuclear Powers would transmit periodically to the non-nuclear States signatories to the treaty an agreed quantity of the fissile material they produce. Such an agreement would be based on the proposal put forward by the United States in 1964 for a "cut-off" (ENDC/120) -- that is, a discontinuance of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons -- a proposal which was not followed up because of the difficulties encountered in connexion with the question of control. It represented, however, an expression of the will to achieve disarmament, an expression of will to which it might perhaps be opportune to revert today.

An agreement of this kind would indirectly subject the production of nuclear weapons by the militarily-nuclear States to a brake consisting in the necessity of allocating part of their fissile material to non-nuclear countries for peaceful uses.

Within the same context, the non-nuclear countries to which the fissile material transferred by the nuclear Powers would be assigned should pay a reduced price compared to the market value; while part of this price would go to the nuclear producing Powers, the other part could be paid into the United Nations funds for the progress of the developing countries.

The agreement thus proposed could also lay down the principles of the distribution of fissile material among the beneficiary countries. As for control, one could refer to the provisions to be proposed for a non-proliferation treaty.

I wish to stress the link that exists in this proposal between the brake on nuclear armament, the encouragement of the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and the aid given to the social and economic progress of the developing countries.

This initiative, of which I have sketched the broad outline, would also be a gesture of goodwill by the nuclear Powers in respect of disarmament to prove their willingness to give up part of their fissile material and to put a brake, even a modest one, on the continuous growth of their military nuclear potential. This initiative would provide them with the means of counterbalancing renunciation by the non-nuclear countries by allocating to them fissile material for peaceful uses at a favourable price, which would not fail to encourage concrete measures to fill the technological gap, such as those that were envisaged in an Italian proposal put forward in 1966. The initiative which we suggest would enable the nuclear countries which would give up part of the value, and the non-nuclear countries which would pay the agreed price, to establish an ideal link between disarmament measures and the progress of developing areas, in conformity with the appeal of His Holiness Pope Paul VI and the Italian proposal made in 1965.

Lastly, if the transfer of fissile material would benefit only the non-nuclear countries signatories to the non-proliferation treaty, the idea which I have just explained to you would favour the accession to this treaty of the greatest possible number of non-nuclear countries by providing an appreciable material and moral compensation for their renunciation of nuclear weapons.

If the Committee agrees that this idea is interesting, the Italian delegation could easily develop it for the purposes of the Conference in a document which might prove useful either in the expectation of a draft treaty and even in its preparation or in supplementing and strengthening it."